

January 24, 2003

The Honorable Greg Nickels
Mayor, City of Seattle
600 Fifth Avenue
12th Floor
Seattle, WA 98104

Attention: Regina LaBelle

Dear Mayor Nickels:

I write in support of Gary Zarker's reconfirmation as Seattle City Light Superintendent.

My name is John Okamoto. I have over twenty-five years experience as a public sector manager in senior executive positions with the City of Seattle, State of Washington, and now with the Port of Seattle. I understand what it takes to be a successful public manager.

I also have worked for and with Mr. Zarker in a variety of positions. I know of his capabilities quite well.

In my experience, he is one of the top public administrators I have encountered.


He is committed to customer service. During his tenure as Director of the Seattle Engineering Department, Mr. Zarker was able to turn around a process oriented bureaucracy into a customer focused organization in a very short period of time.

Mr. Zarker was able to solve some of the toughest issues facing the city during that period of time, including closing two landfills while securing environmentally sound disposal contracts and creating a national leading recycling program. Under his leadership and foresight, a new storm water utility was formed to address urban storm water run-off. He also implemented an innovative financing mechanism for transportation that received national attention.

He is able to grasp complex issues, create strategies, and mobilize resources to move an organization's agenda forward. I marveled at his ability to work with elected officials both locally and nationally, and top officials from other organizations.

The energy crisis fabricated by unscrupulous companies was a once-in-a-lifetime set of events. It is easy to second guess decisions and actions looking backwards, but it would be a terrible mistake to overlook the contributions, strengths, and experience the City has in Gary Zarker.

Sincerely,



John Okamoto